

This is Caroline Duncan interviewing Mrs Margaret Hughes at
10a Portland Place, New Lambton on the 17th of August 1989,
concerning her work in the tailoring industry in Newcastle.

Interviewer: Margaret when and where were you born?

Interviewee: 2nd March 1924 CAROLINE DUNCAN

Interviewer: Where were you born?

Interviewee: At Bathurst.

Interviewer: What was OPEN FOUNDATION?

Interviewee: Broadbent.

Interviewer: When did your family come to Newcastle?

Interviewee: In 1928 AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Interviewer: And how did they come to move here?

Interviewee: My father was on the railway and he was
transferred here. WEDNESDAY 7-9 PM

Interviewer: Where did you live when you first came here?

Interviewee: At Stockton MARGARET HENRY

Interviewer: Which school did you go to?

Interviewee: Well... I wasn't going to school at that stage.

TRANSCRIPT OF TAPED INTERVIEW Coffs Harbour

where I started school at Coffs Harbour.

Interviewer: Right... Did you come back to Newcastle?

Interviewee: In 1957 and I was still in the primary school at
Stockton.

Interviewer: TOPIC: 'TAILORING IN NEWCASTLE'

Interviewee: I went across to Newcastle to the Home Science.

Interviewer: How old were you when you finished school?

Interviewee: About 15. DATE: 17 AUGUST 1989.

Interviewer: When and where did you start work?

Interviewee: Well those days we went up into the arcade at the

PRESENTED ON 6 SEPTEMBER 1989.
the... agency and you paid
about two and sixpence and they guaranteed you a
position. So they sent me down to Haymans in Darby
Street.

Interviewer: And what was Haymans?

Interviewee: It was a um military factory making soldiers
uniforms.

Interviewer: Did you need any needlework experience?

Interviewee: No, none at all. Just put you straight onto a
machine.

The tailor-made suit was once a feature of almost every man's wardrobe. A garment that was made to order was considered to be of the best possible quality and style, as opposed to one that was factory produced.

The 1909 Federal Directory listed twenty-seven tailors and mercers operating in Newcastle, most of whom were situated in Hunter Street. Messrs. Lee and Co; A. C. Moodie; Harry Steggs and Co; Phillips; Eagle Clothing and Tailoring Co; Messrs. Herber Bros; Messrs. Lasker Bros; Messrs. J. A. Leslie and Co; Messrs. Cornish Bros; Mr D. E. Israel; Rundles and Alex Peate were some of the firms in operation at that time.¹

CAROLINE DUNCAN

Competition abounded, each firm vying to offer the highest standards in workmanship, fabrics, fashion and value for money. No matter if the individual was long and slender, short and stout, round or square shouldered, all stated that they could provide the customer with a suit, perfect in shape, cut, style and fit. Businesses carried stocks of English, Scotch, Irish and Australian tweeds, corded, indigo serges, black and indigo worsteds, black and grey llamas and vicunas.²

OPEN FOUNDATION

It was claimed by some that there was 'nothing better, more handsome or economical in the whole of Newcastle than Marrickville tweeds and serges'.³

AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

WEDNESDAY 7-9 pm

Advertisements by tailoring firms regularly appeared in newspapers. All were directed towards capturing the customer's attention. Some advertised that their suits were 'made-on-the-knee', while others emphasised that the best-dressed fashionable sea in town could be provided for the customer.⁴

MARGARET HENRY

ESSAY: 'TAILORING IN NEWCASTLE'.

'The man who would be correct this holiday time can ensure being so by purchasing his needs at Peate's'.⁵ A. C. Moodie advertised that 'a lunatic a day is worth a tailor a year' to get one of my suits'.⁶

PRESENTED ON 6 SEPTEMBER 1989.

In addition to tailoring, many firms also traded as hatters, mercers and general outfitters, offering wide selections in other goods. Mercery departments were well-stocked with such

1 Federal Directory of Newcastle and District, 1909, p.p. 117-119
2 Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate, 14 December 1906
3 Ibid 13 December 1905
4 Ibid 22 November 1929
5 Ibid 7 December 1912
6 Federal Directory, . . . p. 64

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Competition abounded, with all claiming to offer the highest standards in workmanship, fabrics, fashion and value for money. No matter if the individual was long and slender, short and stout, round or square shouldered, all stated that they could provide the customer with a suit, perfect in shape, cut, style and fit. Businesses carried stocks of English, Scotch, Irish and Australian tweeds, worsteds, indigo serges, black and indigo worsteds, black and grey llamas and vicunas.² It was claimed by some that there was 'nothing better, more handsome or economical in the whole world than Marrickville tweeds and serges'.³

Advertisements by tailoring firms regularly appeared in newspapers. All were directed towards capturing the customer's attention. Some advertised that their suits were 'made-on-the-knee'⁴, while others emphasised that the best-dressed fashionable men in town could be provided for at their stores. 'The man who would be correct this holiday time can ensure being so by purchasing his needs at Peate's'.⁵ A. C. Moodie advertised that 'a lunatic at large would have enough sense to get one of my suits'.⁶

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6 Federal Directory..., p.64

items as scarves, ties, shirts, hosiery, collars, braces and belts. A wide assortment of goods originating from England and the Continent were well displayed. Panama hats and hard and soft felts were among the many accessories stocked to complement the tailor-made suit.⁷

D. R. Israels' tailoring business which was located at 69 and 71 Hunter Street; Newcastle West also operated as a Pawnbroker. It offered such services as a Loan's office, foreign money exchange and was where jewellery, placeware, guns and ammunition could be bought.⁸

The tailor-made suit of the early 1900's was predominantly made of navy blue serge. It featured a long coat to the knees, with a split up the back, three or four buttons down the front and flat lapels. Vests, or waistcoats were fancy, sometimes being edged with gold braid. Buttons featured miniature dog heads, racehorses and other decorations.⁹

One of the most important features of the suit at that time was the inclusion of a buttonhole, low on the vest front, which enabled the wearer to carry the heavy gold watches and chains which were fashionable at that time. The buttonhole also allowed for other ornaments such as medals, mementos and picture cases to be worn on the suit. Another favourite worn by men in that period were striped Cashmere trousers, which were worn for Sunday best.¹⁰ The cost of a suit in 1905 was about forty-five shillings, with trousers at thirteen shillings and six pence.¹¹

Before electricity, gas was the source of energy used to heat pressing equipment and to provide lighting for the workrooms. 'The irons were called goosenecks and to heat them, they were placed into a gas fed stove'.¹²

It was also common practice in the early 1900's for tailors to display their materials along their shop fronts, allowing customers closer access to inspect the fabrics. The junior

7 Newcastle Morning..., 13 December 1905

8 Ibid

9 Ibid 6 November 1953

10 Ibid

11 Ibid 13 December 1905

12 Richard Lindsay Rundle, 'Telling Tailoring', p.15, Held at Newcastle Region Public Library

13 Newcastle Morning... 6 November 1953

shop-boy was positioned near the front of the shop and with the aid of a long cane, was responsible for deterring dogs from 'fouling' the displays of stock. The boys were referred to as dog-wallopers.¹³

The tailors' workshop was a hive of activity, with many staff employed to ensure that every garment produced was of a first-class standard. Expert hands, cutters, measurers and tradesmen were busy at work. Other jobs included trimmers, fitters, pressers, brushers and folders, examiners, seam and underpressers, ladies' tailors, vesthands and machinists.¹⁴ They belonged to the Amalgamated Journeymen Tailors' Union and their wages in 1919, under the Clothing Trades Award varied between thirty-seven shillings for trouser finishers, to four pound, ten shillings for order cutters.¹⁵

Although men's suits were the main garments made, some ladies' costumes, shirts and pyjama suits were also tailor-made.¹⁶ During the War years of 1939 to 1945, many tailors¹⁷ supplemented their work with making military uniforms.

Once the customer had selected the style and fabric for their garment, the cutters would measure and cut out the garment. Suit sizes consisted of regular-size for standard people, half-size for people with long arms and legs and quarter-size for those with round middles.¹⁸ After the garment had been cut out, it would pass to another specialist who would cut collars, flaps, facings and pockets. Great skill and care was required when matching striped or checkered fabrics. Pocket-linings and canvas inter-linings, which in early days were made of horse-hair, were also cut out. The correct number of buttons and buckles for vests and trousers were also applied. Buttonholes were sewn by hand with buttonhole twist, a special type of thread.¹⁹ Beeswax was applied to the thread to give extra strength. No pins were used during assembly of the garment. Every section was tacked and basted by hand. Canvases and linings were pre-shrunk in buckets of water and hung out

13 Ibid

14 Newcastle Morning..., 26 May 1919

15 Ibid

16 Ibid 13 December 1905

17 Rundle, Telling..., p.35

18 Interview with Margaret Hughes

19 Newcastle Morning..., 6 November 1953

to dry. There were no zippers. Hooks and eyes and buttons were the types of fastenings used.²⁰

Although sewing-machines were used, much of the sewing was done by hand, using open-ended thimbles. A familiar sight was that of the tailor, a tape measure draped around his neck, sitting cross-legged on a bench, stitching away. A pair of tailoring shears, which measured approximately twelve inches long, were at his side.²¹

Once the suit had been fitted, any alterations would be completed and then passed to the presser. He would use an exceptionally heavy iron and a damp cloth. The material was intermittently pounded with a block of wood to give an excellent finish. When the suit had been pressed to perfection, it was carefully wrapped in tissue paper, packed into a box and tied with string. A coat hanger with the firm's name imprinted on it, was usually packed with the suit. The cost of a suit in 1946 was about twelve pound.²²

The advent of wash and wear fabrics, a more casual approach to dress and the fact that 'off-the-hook' clothing was cheaper, saw a decline in the demand for tailor-made garments. As a result of the changes in the industry and the competition brought about by clothing factories, many tailoring businesses were forced to close their doors.

Richard Lindsay Rundle, 'Telling Tailoring', as recorded by Winston Turner, Manuscript, 1980, Held at Newcastle Region Public Library.

Taped interview with Margaret Hughes. Preliminary and subsequent conversations with her.

- 20 Interview...
 21 Ibid
 22 Ibid

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Taped interview with Margaret Hughes. Preliminary and subsequent conversations with her.

A Lunatic at Large

Would have sense enough to get one of my **£33/- SUITS** Made to Order. They are made of the very best Material. Fit and Workmanship Guaranteed.

A. C. MOODIE,
"THE" PRACTICAL TAILOR.
139 Hunter Street West, NEWCASTLE.

Green Coupons Given, for Cash Only!

IF YOU REQUIRE A
GOOD SUIT
FOR 'XMAS

HARRY STECCA & CO.

CAN DO THE
RIGHT THING.

PRICES: 63/-, 70/-, 84/-

For Tennis, Fashion or White Shirts, we
have the largest Stock to select from.

74 HUNTER STREET.

MOTHERS!

BRING YOUR
LITTLE BOYS
To the

EMBLE Clothing & Tailoring Co.
78 Hunter Street.

We have a very
Large Stock of
Juvenile Clothing
to Select from.

Very Busy in the Tailoring
Department.

We are still making our Famous 42/-
Better Quality at 50/-, 63/-, 70/-, 75/- & 84/- SUITS.

As Perfect as Experts Can Make Them - - -



Our Suits are as perfect as experts can make them. Perfect in every detail—from the material down to the last stitch. It's no joke buying clothes. They run into money. Hence it is necessary that you get right garments at a right price.

It's necessary to have material that will be durable—to have a suit that is shapely and will **RETAIN ITS SHAPE**. If the shape "goes off" the suit isn't fit to wear. That's just where we excel.

Our Garments are made so well—linings are perfect finishing is first class. The result is a stylish, shape-retaining suit of durability and style. If you let us have your next order for a suit we'll make it on the understanding that you are to send it back if it isn't all we claim.

Suit Prices, 63s to £5.

PHILLIPS,

THE RECORD TAILOR

(THE ONLY EXCLUSIVE TAILOR IN NEWCASTLE)

32 Hunter-street.

7842

Federal Directory of Newcastle and District, 1909.

Who is Your Tailor?
WHY, THE RECORD BREAKER.
TOM JOHNS,
THE CHAMPION TAILOR OF NEWCASTLE.
92 Hunter Street West.



RUNDLE,

The Prince of Cutters.

A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT TAILOR TO
THE OTHERS.

ATKINSON & HUGHES

(1st FLOOR)


Hunter Street, Newcastle.

The Leading West End Tailors,
Hatters and Mercers.

H. P. Cornish & Co.,

239 Hunter St. West.

Our Motto: High Quality at Low Prices.
Telephone 444.

 **A Couple or Three More Points
About Marrickville Goods.**

It was publicly asserted that it was impossible to procure these goods at more than one place in Newcastle. It is now stated that it was, and is, possible to procure them from other warehouses, and therefore equally possible that we can handle them.

 **OUR STOCK WAS PURCHASED AT THE
FOUNTAIN HEAD,**

~~THE BULK OF IT QUITE RECENTLY, AND WE ASK NO ONE'S PERMISSION
TO SELL IT.~~

THOUSANDS OF SUITS

ARE MADE IN NEWCASTLE EVERY YEAR, AND WE MAKE MORE ON OUR
PREMISES THAN ANY OTHER FIRM IN THE CITY.

 **You Try Us for Your Next Suit,**

WE CAN GIVE YOU THE LARGEST AND BEST STOCK IN NEWCASTLE TO
CHOOSE FROM, AND HAVE ABSOLUTELY THE SMARTEST CUTTERS OUT OF
SYDNEY.

LASKER'S,
TAILORS, HATTERS, & MERCERS,

82 & 84 HUNTER-ST.

5519

Newcastle Morning Herald, 7 December, 1912.

SPRING

NEW GOODS.

CHOICE DESIGNS



YOU ARE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR SOMETHING SMART AND UP-TO-DATE FOR YOUR NEW SUIT. WE HAVE JUST OPENED A LARGE SHIPMENT OF LATEST SUITINGS AND TROUSERINGS FOR THE COMING SEASON.

IT'S NO ADVANTAGE TO WAIT TILL HALF THE SEASON'S OVER, AND THE CHOICEST OF THE GOODS SOLD.

ORDER NOW.

FASHIONABLE SAC SUITS, 63/-

ALEX. PEATE,

MERCHANT TAILOR,

HATTER & MERCHANT.

217 AND 229 HUNTER-STREET WEST

Right Opposite Carrington Bridge.

4523

A Man's Clothes are among his best assets

The man who prospers was never more careful of his appearance than to-day, for he has found that the door to success, both business and social, opens more readily to the well-groomed, correctly tailored man.

He is practical, and when choosing his Tailor, does not part with his money on sentimental grounds.

So much the better for the Store that serves him best, and no store can claim to serve him best unless it holds the HIGHEST STANDARDS in WORKMANSHIP, FABRICS and in FASHION.

PEATE'S

were never more ready and anxious to have practical men, of right taste, judge them from these standpoints, as well as from the standpoint of prices. We are anxious to have them see

Peate Tailored Suits in the Making

Quality, Cut, Workmanship and attention to every detail will be found irreprouchable.



The New Spring Suitings are here

Quiet Cheviots, Serges, Distinctive Tweeds and many others.

ASK FOR PATTERNS.

ALEX. PEATE & CO.

"THE HOUSE WITH THE QUALITY POLICY."

511-513 HUNTER STREET, NEWCASTLE.



SUIT HARMONY For Spring Days

IS A SUBJECT THAT SHOULD INTEREST YOU IF YOU TAKE THE RIGHT VIEWPOINT. DON'T WEAR A SUIT THAT'S GREEN WITH AGE, OR BECOME GREEN WITH ENVY WHEN YOU SEE A MAN WELL DRESSED AND THEN IMAGINE YOU ARE IN HARMONY WITH SPRING. IT'S THE FRESHNESS AND THE BRIGHTNESS OF NATURE THAT YOU'VE GOT TO EMULATE—NOT THE COLOUR SCHEME. LET US GIVE YOU A LIFT AND PUT YOU IN THE SPRIGHTLY WAY.

A RUNDLE Suit to Order

will give you that dandy look that will make your friends sit up and take notice. There's distinction in Style, Fit, and Finish of every Garment Tailored by RUNDLE—that's a fact you should realise.

A Tailored Proposition that emanates from RUNDLE'S is a dead sure thing for satisfaction, no matter what the season may be.

LET US HAVE YOUR ORDER NOW.

A FINE RANGE OF NOBBY SUITINGS ARE HERE FOR YOUR SELECTION—STEP IN AND INDICATE YOUR CHOICE TO-DAY.

R. T. RUNDLE,

"THE PRINCE OF CUTTERS,"

121 HUNTER-STREET, NEWCASTLE.

PHONE 81

KURRI KURRI BRANCH, T. SCHOFIELD, MANAGER.

Newcastle Morning Herald, 22 November, 1929.

“MADE ON THE KNEE!”

Every Man who knows anything about Tailoring knows that “made on the knee” means Hand-made.

Therefore—We want every man in Newcastle, to know that all SWIFT'S SUITS are “Made on the Knee” right on the spot by experienced Newcastle Tailors.

Now—What about ordering your Christmas Suit from us, and being assured of Perfect Fit and Smart Finish? Of course you've heard that our prices mean a saving of £2.

SWIFT & CO.

“MADE ON THE KNEE.”

479 Hunter-street West (between Union and Auckland Streets).

This is Caroline Duncan interviewing Mrs Margaret Hughes at 30a Portland Place; New Lambton on the 17th of August 1989, concerning her work in the tailoring industry in Newcastle.

- Interviewer: Margaret when and where were you born?
- Interviewee: 2nd March 1924.
- Interviewer: Where were you born?
- Interviewee: At Bathurst.
- Interviewer: What was your maiden name?
- Interviewee: Broadbent.
- Interviewer: When did your family come to Newcastle?
- Interviewee: In 1928.
- Interviewer: And how did they come to move here?
- Interviewee: My father worked on the railway and he was transferred here.
- Interviewer: Where did you live when you first came here?
- Interviewee: At Stockton.
- Interviewer: Which school did you go to?
- Interviewee: Well... I wasn't going to school at that stage and then we were transferred to Coffs Harbour where I started school at Coffs Harbour.
- Interviewer: Right, so then when did you come back to Newcastle?
- Interviewee: In 1937 and I was still in the primary school at Stockton.
- Interviewer: Which high school did you go to?
- Interviewee: I went across to Newcastle to the Home Science.
- Interviewer: How old were you when you finished school?
- Interviewee: About 15.
- Interviewer: When and where did you start work?
- Interviewee: Well those days we went up into the arcade at the top of town to an employment agency and you paid about two and sixpence and they guaranteed you a position. So they sent me down to Haymans in Darby Street.
- Interviewer: And what was Haymans?
- Interviewee: It was a um military factory making soldiers uniforms.
- Interviewer: Did you need any needlework experience?
- Interviewee: No, none at all. Just put you straight onto a machine.

Interviewer: So, how long did you work there for?

Interviewee: For nine months.

Interviewer: And how did you come to leave there and why was that?

Interviewee: Well, I asked Mr Carroll if he knew where I could get a job in the tailoring because we knew the War was going to finish and you wanted to ha, get a trade so he said yes. He made arrangements for, to meet me on the Saturday morning and have an interview at Alex Peate and I got the position there.

Interviewer: Where was Alex Peate located?

Interviewee: At 79 Hunter Street.

Interviewer: Are the premises still there?

Interviewee: No, they're not there today ah, its been demolished and the new bank building is there now on the corner.

Interviewer: So, which section of Hunter Street was that?

Interviewee: It was straight across from the Post Office.

Interviewee: The bank, the ah bank building on each corner and the Criterion Hotel and to go into Peate's we had to go down in Bolton Street, in down a laneway into Alec Peate's show, workrooms.

Interviewer: Were you required to serve an apprenticeship?

Interviewee: Yes, four years apprenticeship.

Interviewer: Were there many other tailors in Newcastle?

Interviewee: Yes, there were quite a few. There were Hunter and Allan, who were over the top of the Ritz Milk Bar where Caldwell's are today and there was Elliott's and Rundles and A. Dodd and Company and later on there was um D'Argervilles and Johnson's and Steggas.

Interviewer: And where were they located?

Interviewee: Well, D'Argervilles and Johnson's were at Hamilton but Steggas were at Market Street.

Interviewer: In Newcastle?

Interviewee: Mmmm.

Interviewer: Was Alex Peate a prestigious firm?

Interviewee: Well, if you worked there you could get a job anywhere.

Interviewer: How many people did they employ?
Interviewee: Between thirty and forty.
Interviewer: Were they mainly male or female?
Interviewee: Only six male. That was Mr Hollingshed the Secretary Manager and Alec and Lance Peate were the cutters and we had Doug Goodworth, he was a cutter and Alan Marshall used to do the messages. And we had a Mr Davis was the foreman in the workroom and Mr Sheldon was the presser.
Interviewer: So, the rest of the girls then were.
Interviewee: Yes all female, seniors and juniors.
Interviewer: Can you describe the workplace?
Interviewee: Well, it was very old ... and I'm not surprised that it's demolished today. It was just so very old. But ah, well when you look at the workplaces today it was, ah well getting to the tatty stage I suppose you could say.
Interviewer: What was the lighting like?
Interviewee: Oh, the lights hung from the ceiling by a big cord and they were quite large but there was about four to a big bench. No fluorescent lights in those days.
Interviewer: So, where did everybody sit? Did you have special positions?
Interviewee: Oh yes, each had their position where they sat at the table.
Interviewer: And were they individual tables?
Interviewee: No, they all sat at the one long bench. The machinists sat over on the corner.
Interviewer: Was there a showroom or a shop?
Interviewee: Yes, there was a shop and a showroom downstairs.
Interviewer: And how did they display the materials and patterns?
Interviewee: Well, more or less like a material shop.
Interviewer: They had the rolls on the shelf and they got down whatever you chose and like if they had a something in the fitting room they'd bring it out and say would you like it made like this? Somebody's having this made and you could say

Interviewee: yes or no, they'd show you something else.

Interviewee: Double breasters or single breasters or, um

Interviewer: flaps or jetted flaps or jetted pockets,

Interviewee: whatever.

Interviewer: How many hours did you work?

Interviewee: We worked forty eight hours. From 8 am in

Interviewer: the morning 'til 5.30 every night and on a

Interviewee: Friday night we worked 'til a quarter to six.

Interviewer: Why was that on a Friday?

Interviewee: Well, we had to be paid on a Friday night and

Interviewer: we had to be paid in our own time, not in the

Interviewee: firms' time and the machinists switched off

Interviewer: their machines at 5.30 and you had a quarter

Interviewee: of an hour to clean your machine and oil it

Interviewer: and leave it over the weekend oiled, and in

Interviewee: the Monday morning came in and took all the

Interviewer: oil out. Run it through on little scraps

Interviewee: of material and away we went for another week.

Interviewer: Did you have lunch and tea breaks?

Interviewee: Well, we had a morning tea break of ten minutes

Interviewer: and then we had a lunch time break about oh,

Interviewee: half an hour, forty minutes.

Interviewer: Did you have holidays?

Interviewee: Two weeks.

Interviewer: And was there a lunch room or facilities?

Interviewee: No, there was no lunchroom, we just went down

Interviewer: the street and bought our lunch and came back

Interviewee: and sat and ate it where we were.

Interviewer: Did you belong to a Union?

Interviewee: Yes, we belonged to the Amalgamated Clothing

Interviewer: Union, but we never had any strikes. We never

Interviewee: had any trouble. Everything went smoothly

Interviewer: and we were delighted when the Union man came

Interviewee: and told us that we were going to get forty-four

Interviewer: hours a week and not work on a Friday night.

Interviewee: So, what difference did that actually make? Were

Interviewer: your hours through all the week shorter?

Interviewee: Yes, our hours were cut down. I think perhaps

Interviewer: we got a longer lunch hour, it worked out

Interviewee: that way.

Interviewer: And what exactly was your job?

Interviewee: I was a coat machinist.

Interviewer: And what were your wages?

Interviewee: Well, I started off on nine shillings a week and then when I finished my time it was three pound, seventeen and sixpence.

Interviewer: Was there a difference paid between the wages of a male and a female?

Interviewee: Yes, there were, but I never saw their award so I don't know what it was, but I would say they were getting about six pound a week.

Interviewer: How many machinists were there?

Interviewee: Well, there was a trouser machinist, a coat machinist and a junior and when I finished my apprenticeship I went upstairs as a vest machinist and they brought a Betty Sheldon in, that was the pressers' daughter and she was the junior. So there was four machinists.

Interviewer: Were there quotas to fill?

Interviewee: Yes, the girls on the coats did about three and a half coats each a week.

Interviewer: What were some of the other types of jobs that people had?

Interviewee: Well, some were trouser hands and some were vest hands and some were able to do ladies' costumes, skirts and the skirts were made by hand, oh the hems were done by hand and the feathertacks if you had an inverted pleat in the back, and ah, ah hooks and eyes on the placket. There was no zips and some girls did that type of work as well as being a coat maker, they made skirts and coats and jackets.

Interviewer: So, was there much tailoring of ladies' outfits done?

Interviewee: Not a great deal there oh, I suppose about, to my knowledge about three or four ladies in the town that actually went to Alec Peate's and had a suit made.

Interviewer: Were there usually regular customers?

Interviewee: Oh yes, oh yes they had their regular customers

Interviewee: oh you know, for instance the ^LTodd Hunters, that's a well known Mayfield name, the Todd-Hunters and they were Dentists and they always had their clothes made at Peate's. I'm just trying to think of other people that had their clothes made.

Interviewer: So it was quite a um.., mainly that type

Interviewee: Oh yes., and tweeds.

Interviewer: Distinction to have your clothes made at Peate's?

Interviewee: Yes, yes it was.

Interviewer: What were the staff like that you worked with?

Interviewee: Oh lovely. The girls were lovely and you know we still meet today, every year, at least twenty to twenty-two to twenty-four, and they're just the same as they were in those days.

Interviewer: What actual steps were involved in making the suit?

Interviewee: Well, Lance and Alec would cut them out depending um, some people were regular size was straight out suit, some people had longer arms and legs, like tall thin people and they were a half size and some people were a bit round the middle and they were the quarter size and it would be rolled up, the canvases would be rolled up and the material, the lining and everything and a girl would go down and pick up her coat and bring it up and undo it, and she'd go with the canvases and dip them in the bucket and they were pre-shrunk, and then they were hung out to dry naturally and then she'd bring the pieces over to us and darts and things that she wanted put in. And then she'd want the breast pocket and we'd turn that out on the machine and we'd inch, press it and put it in and then we'd put whatever pockets they wanted on it and in a sports coat they'd have patch pocket. But um and while we were doing that, the girls would be going on putting their coat together you know, there was a tremendous amount of basting and, and tacking and sewing to the suit to the coats,

Interviewee: but um, then they'd have to get it ready
 Interviewee: for um, a fitting so we would only make the,
 one sleeve up and they'd tack the one sleeve
 in, it would go down for a fitting.

Interviewer: What types of materials were used?
 Interviewee: Well, they used serge or worsted or saltene
 or Donigal Tweed and um, mainly that type
 of thing, and tweeds.

Interviewer: Where did the fabrics usually come from?
 Interviewee: They came from England.

Interviewer: Were there different suit linings?
 Interviewee: No, mainly all silk, It was all silk.

Interviewer: Was there any colors of fabric more popular?
 Interviewee: Well, in those days you only had either the
 Interviewee: light grey, which they called silver grey, or
 a medium grey or a navy or a black. Not too
 many black, mainly navy.

Interviewer: What were the styles of suits?
 Interviewee: Well, single breaster or double breaster, or
 as I say, um sports jackets.

Interviewer: And trousers?
 Interviewee: Yes, oh yes the trousers with the wide bottoms.
 Flares they called them with cuffs on and
 buttons on the fly's which are coming back into
 Interviewer: vogue, and extended band and it had a hook,
 Interviewee: but it wasn't an eye, it was like a metal um,
 well I'll call it an eye that was hooked onto.

Interviewer: Vests, how were they made?
 Interviewee: Oh yes, the vests were mainly all breast pockets
 Interviewee: on them, sometimes they had jettted pockets and
 they would have a canvas, but a light-weight
 Interviewer: canvas put on the inside, but the backs were
 Interviewee: always done with a silk and they had from a inch,
 about two inches into an inch and they had a
 little buckle and that did up at the back and
 that tightened it in, or let it out, whatever.
 The mens' trousers had the same, they had the
 same, they had that little extended band, they
 Interviewer: had the same little buckle and that was to let
 out or take in, whatever.

Interviewer: What type of buttons were used?

Interviewee: Well, we only had two sizes. That was the, the little button for the cuff or the button for the coat and the same button for the vest. And we had, they were mottled and we had either um, light grey or dark grey, or a fawn, or a biscuit color, or a navy or a black. Or a leather button for a jacket, sports jacket.

Interviewer: Were there any other types of trimmings used on suits?

Interviewee: Only um, feathertacks or, on sports jackets. And um...

Interviewer: What were feathertacks?

Interviewee: Oh they, you put a piece of canvas under where the pleat finished or the edge of the pocket and you drew, did it in a twist like a pyramid and you went backwards and forwards and it finished like a pyramid, but it stopped the, the pleat from breaking away.

Interviewer: And were there shoulder pads?

Interviewee: Oh yes, the girls went to a lot of trouble to make their shoulder pads for the coats. A lot of work involved in the shoulder pads.

Interviewer: What sort of material was used to make those?

Interviewee: Oh they used a, a type of a canvas and then they used a white wadding and then they used a grey wadding.

Interviewer: And how were collars done?

Interviewee: Well, collars were done with um, a Melton cloth underneath and then they were all stitched and then the serge was put on top.

Interviewer: Was there much pressing going on throughout?

Interviewee: Oh yes, we were forever lasted at the iron and particularly with jetted pockets and that, you had to soap your seams and then you got your piece of wood and you lay it open with the iron and let the soap holds the seam flat.

Interviewer: So did that entail, oh or guarantee a nice finish?

Interviewee: Yes, that was a nice firm finish.

Interviewer: What types of pockets were there?

Interviewee: There was ah, jettted pockets, um flaps or jettted pocket with flap or patch pockets.

Interviewer: And the linings, like in a trouser pockets, were they a different fabric?

Interviewee: Yes, they were a um..... selicia lining it was that we used for that.

Interviewer: Was special thread used?

Interviewee: Yes, we used a twist and a thread, and um, that was for the buttonholes and they used to wax the thread and ah, and in the buttonholes on the cuffs we didn't do real buttonholes.

Interviewer: We did imitation and we called them mogue holes.

Interviewer: So, when you say that the thread was waxed, how, what sort of wax was used?

Interviewee: Beeswax.

Interviewer: And what was the purpose of that?

Interviewee: To strengthen the cotton for the wear and tear on the buttonhole.

Interviewer: What types of machines were used?

Interviewee: We had Singer, but they were an industrial type of Singer, a heavy quality tailoring machines they were.

Interviewer: And how did you clean those?

Interviewee: Oh, every Friday the um, power was switched off and we had a little brush and everything came to pieces and then we put it all back together and oiled it.

Interviewer: Was there much sewing done by hand?

Interviewee: Tremendous amount of sewing done by hand, um well, once they got their pockets in, then they had to lay the canvases on and then they had to do it with um a drawing in tape, and when they machined that around that made that a much firmer edge. When the coats were finished you could, you know, it was the choice of the person to have a machine edge or a hand stitched edge.

Interviewer: So, what parts of the suit would have been um, sewn on the machine?

Interviewee: Oh um, well the darts to start with and then the um, pockets and then you know as the girls progressed they'd want the shoulder seams done or they'd want the side seams done, or they'd want their shoulders, sleeves stitched in and the linings to the sleeves had to be made and linings to the coats had to be made, and we always had a inside breast pocket and sometimes you had a little low pocket down here.

Interviewer: And how were buttons stitched on?

Interviewer: Oh, they were stitched on with a little neck, and you used to wind the cotton around ah,

Interviewee: had about that much, about an eighth of an inch that was never sewn flat onto the coat and um, you'd sew your button on but you always had that much material and since you went round and round like that and the button always sat that far out from the coat.

Interviewer: And how were hems done?

Interviewee: By hand.

Interviewer: What did the term made on the knee refer to?

Interviewee: Oh well, Mr Davis used to sit up on his bench and actually sit there with his knees crossed and he'd sew by the hour, off, on his knees, stitching, handsewing all the time.

Interviewer: And how much did suits cost?

Interviewee: They cost about twelve pounds those days.

Interviewer: Did you make overcoats or was it mainly just the suits?

Interviewee: No, we, well to my knowledge we never ever made a, an overcoat.

Interviewer: And who was responsible for fitting the suit?

Interviewee: Lance and Alec Peate.

Interviewer: And how were the suits packaged when they were finished?

Interviewee: Well ah, when they were um, finished they were folded in a certain way. They were folded

Interviewee: with this shoulder inside that one and around like that and then folded in tissue and then placed in a box with Alec Peate on the box and a coathanger went with Alec Peate's name went on that coathanger in the box and then it was tied up with string, and then they made a handle of the string for you to carry it.

Interviewer: During the War years were there shortages of materials?

Interviewee: Not really, um if we looked like we were going to be a little bit short, Officers, Army Officers came in and had their jackets made to order.

Interviewer: Was there still a big demand for suits at that time?

Interviewee: Yes, there was still a big demand for suits. It wasn't 'til after the War when they started to make the cheaper suits what they called off the hook and people started buying cheaper suits then.

Interviewer: Do you have any particular memories of events during the War?

Interviewee: Oh yes, I remember about my fiance he was at Richmond at the time. He was a photographer and if he knew he was coming to, to Williamtown on a project for the day, he's tell me, he said we'll be coming up to the Post Office and we'll be doing a by, um a fly pass down Hunter Street about 10 am, and sure enough 10 am they'd do the fly pass and away they'd go to Williamtown and do their days work before returning to Richmond.

Interviewer: Can you remember the day the War finished?

Interviewee: Oh sure, I really can remember the day War finished. Everybody just ran out of the buildings and I could particularly remember the girls running out of Selfridges, which is Coles today, and there weren't many, weren't hardly any traffic about, but there was one truck going down past Selfridges and everybody

Interviewee: ran out and jumped on this truck and it was
Interviewee: hilarious to see those girls jumping off this
truck. But the ferry whistles were blowing,
the train whistles were blowing, the BHP whistles,
oh everybody that had, had a whistle was blowing
Interviewer: it. why would he have approached you?

Interviewer: Were the streets of Newcastle tarred then?

Interviewee: Oh yes, yes they were tarred then, but see

Interviewer: we had tram lines down the centre then because
the trams were running down the middle of

Interviewee: Hunter Street then. y became cheaper by being

Interviewer: And where were you living then? of thing so

Interviewee: I was living at Wallsend with my parents.

My parents had a, by this time my father had
retired early and had a poultry farm up Lake
Road, so I'd get up at 5.30 am in the morning
and we'd have to get the six o'clock bus that
was coming from West Wallsend, Johnson's Bus
Service and we'd go down into Wallsend where

Interviewer: we would get a tram at 7 am and that would

take us into Newcastle Railway Station where
we would get out, off and walk up to the Post
Office and walk across and just go down the
lane of the Criterion and be there for eight
o'clock. ngs were made to last. Things today

Interviewer: And during the War, how did people pay for
their suits? days were dry clean only, where

Interviewee: With coupons, you had to have coupons for

Interviewer: everything. You had to have coupons for sugar,

Interviewee: tea and everything and you, I think it was
something like forty coupons you had to have
to get a suit. d those days if you had a tailor

Interviewer: Where did you work besides Peate's? a men today

Interviewee: Well, after I was married I went out to D'Argevilles
and Johnson's at Hamilton for a short while
and then I went to Steggas which is, was on
the corner of Hunter Street and Market Streets
near the Stockton ferry.

Interviewer: And why did you leave Peate's? ans used today

Interviewee: I left there to get married.

- Interviewer: What year was that?
- Interviewee: 1946 and oh, while I was out at D'Argervilles it was the foreman from Steggas that came and asked me to go to Steggas so I went there until early 1949.
- Interviewer: So why would he have approached you?
- Interviewee: Well apparently he was looking for a coat machinist and somebody recommended me to him, so.
- Interviewer: What were the reasons for the introduction of the off the hook clothing?
- Interviewee: Well um, people they became cheaper by being made like mass production type of thing so Alec Peate wasn't selling as many made to order so he took in Eric Tandy to supplement his income and um, he sold shirts and socks and all that sort of thing and eventually when wash and wear came in, jeans came in well Peate's finally closed their doors in 1975.
- Interviewer: What are the differences do you think between the tailor made clothing and the clothing of today?
- Interviewee: Well, there's really no difference, really no comparison I should say, because those days things were made to last. Things today aren't really, aren't made to last and the suits those days were dry clean only, where today it's more or less wash and wear.
- Interviewer: So is the clothing today of a better standard?
- Interviewee: Well, I don't think so. It's a different type of um clothing today. They were really a good standard those days if you had a tailor made suit you know. But I have seen men today and I admire them. I've seen solicitors and that type of thing wearing the good quality suits, 'cause I'm sure they're paying between three and four and five hundred dollars today for the same thing.
- Interviewer: So are there different techniques used today in garment construction?

Interviewee: Well, I would say not, some places are doing a lot more machining though. I'd say there's not as much handsewing done. Ah mainly, mainly more machining today, you know, the quicker they're made the better and you know, the cheaper they can turn them out the better, type of thing you know.

Interviewer: So since you finished at Steggas have you continued with um, with sewing at all?

Interviewee: Oh not unless family come and say you know, can you let a pair of pants out, or can you take something in for me or something like that, but not a great lot, but if anybody asks me I always do it.

The tape was finished at this point, but recommenced.

Interviewer: Was tailoring what you really wanted to do Margaret?

Interviewee: Well, in the circumstances where there was, my mother and father had two of us and couldn't afford to send us both to ah, business college, so my brother went to the business college and I went to do a trade, which they thought was the best thing ah, for a girl to have a trade in sewing that you can always even alter frocks, you can make frocks, you can do just about anything, but I wasn't a cutter, I was just a sewer you know. But I was quite happy because I couldn't have worked with a nicer lot of girls, really I couldn't have and they were, they just fabulous.

The interview concluded at this point.

Margaret Hughes was born in 1924 and commenced employment as a machinist with Hayman's in Darby Street; Newcastle at the age of fifteen years. Hayman's was a military factory which concentrated on manufacturing soldiers' uniforms. Because it was known that the War would eventually finish, Margaret wanted to learn a trade. She approached the Union representative, who was able to obtain an interview for her at Alex Peate's tailoring firm, which was considered to be a rather prestigious firm at that time.

Margaret gained an apprenticeship as a coat machinist with Peate's, which was situated at 79 Hunter Street; Newcastle, across from the Post Office. After serving her four year apprenticeship, she became a vest machinist.

The firm employed CAROLINE DUNCAN forty staff, most of whom worked as trouser hands, vest hands and machinists. There were only six sales OPEN FOUNDATION They comprised of the cutters, the Secretary Manager, the Foreman and the presser.

Staff worked a fortnight WEDNESDAY 7-9 pm, from 8 am to 5.30 pm Monday to Thursday and from 8 am to 5.45 pm on Friday. The hours were later reduced MARGARET HENRY hours per week. The wages of a coat machinist started at nine shillings per week, increasing to three pounds AUSTRALIAN HISTORY sixpence at the end of the apprenticeship.

The majority of SUMMARY OF TRANSCRIPT were suits, with much of the sewing done by hand. A familiar sight was that of the foreman, sitting cross-legged on a bench, stitching away by hand. There was an enormous amount of basting and tacking done and buttonholes were all stitched by hand. Beeswax was applied to the thread to give extra strength. Buttons were also stitched on by hand.

Materials came from England and were of an excellent quality. Serges, worsteds, saltenes and tweeds were all displayed in a showroom situated in the downstairs section of the premises. Coat linings and vest backs were made of silk. The cost of a suit in 1946 was approximately twelve pound and it is estimated that to buy a suit today of similar quality, would cost between three, four and five hundred dollars.

Suit coats were mainly single or double breasted with varying types of pockets. Trousers had wide flared legs, cuffs and button fly's.

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The firm employed between thirty and forty staff, most of whom worked as trouser hands, vest hands and machinists. There were only six male staff employed. They comprised of the cutters, the Secretary Manager, the Foreman and the presser.

Staff worked a forty-eight hour week, from 8 am to 5.30 pm Monday to Thursday and from 8 am to 5.45 pm on Friday. The hours were later reduced to forty-four hours per week. The wages of a coat machinist started at nine shillings per week, increasing to three pound, seventeen and sixpence at the end of the apprenticeship.

The majority of tailor-made garments were suits, with much of the sewing done by hand. A familiar sight was that of the foreman, sitting cross-legged on a bench, stitching away by hand. There was an enormous amount of basting and tacking done and buttonholes were all stitched by hand. Beeswax was applied to the thread to give extra strength. Buttons were also stitched on by hand.

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A small number of ladies' garments were tailored at Peate's, however the bulk of the work came from mens' suits. Skirts were made by hand also, and as there were no zippers, hooks and eyes and buttons were the types of fastenings used. Feathertacks were placed at the top of an inverted pleat to prevent tearing, and also featured on the pockets of coats and jackets.

Throughout the various stages of the garments construction, pressing played an important part. Soap was used to hold seams flat and guaranteed a firm, flat finish.

The introduction of cheaper clothing which could be purchased off the hook, saw the end of many tailoring businesses. Wash and wear fabrics and a more casual mode of dress saw a decline in the demand for tailor-made clothing.

for the use of other bona fide researchers

Signed

A. Hughes

Date

12/2/89

Interviewer

Caroline Hurcan
CAROLINE HURCAN

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1989

I, MARGARET HUGHES give my
permission to CAROLINE DUNCAN

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for the use of other bona fide researchers.

Signed M. Hughes

Date 17/8/89

Interviewer Caroline Duncan

CAROLINE DUNCAN